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SUBJECT: CUBA: FIDEL CASTRO'S HEALTH, CRITICS OF HUGO  
CHAVEZ PRAISED

REF: HAVANA 1098

Classified By: COM: Michael E. Parmly: For reasons 1.4 b/d

11. (C) POL officer met with Spanish Embassy Political Counselor on 26 November for an informal discussion re the status of on-island affairs. Spanish POL Counselor noted that he was again hearing vague rumors from his own embassy and the Spanish business community regarding Fidel Castro,s deteriorating condition, specifically mentioning that Fidel had cancer and was terminally ill. POL Counselor cited the recent postponement of visits by various heads-of-state to Cuba as evidence of Fidel,s worsened condition, and privately wondered if the Dictator would live through 2007.

12. (C) POL Counselor also noted that his counterparts at Cuba,s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) had privately applauded the public criticism of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez by Spanish King Juan Carlos. The MINREX officials noted that Chavez,s public dressing-down by the King was "well-deserved" and expressed their appreciation of the King,s boldness in confronting the Venezuelan President.  
PARMLY